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TAGS: PREL PGOV EUN KWBG IS  
SUBJECT: MINISTERS TO DECIDE FINAL WORDING ON CONTENTIOUS  
DRAFT EU COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE

REF: TEL AVIV 2577

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Christopher Murray for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) USEU Deputy Pol M-C spoke separately to Swedish, Italian and Spanish diplomats December 1 and 2 about the draft text on Middle East peace being prepared as a formal conclusion to be adopted at the December 7-8 Foreign Affairs Council (FAC--which replaces the GAERC). All three diplomats are members of the Maghreb/Mashrek Working Group, made up of all 27 Member States, which prepares and frequently finalizes conclusions to be adopted. All were aware of the stories in Haaretz and other outlets containing a leaked version of the draft statement.

¶2. (C/NF) The Swedish diplomat (who chairs the Working Group under the Swedish presidency) seemed to confirm that the leaked draft was valid. She said that it contains no language not previously used by the EU in recent public statements, including in EU Statements about the Goldstone Report, the Statement issued by the EU and Jordan after their November Association Council meeting, and other recent statements issued in the wake of Israel's announcement of housing demolitions in East Jerusalem. She said that, contrary to press reports, there was considerable support from many other Member States for the language proposed by Sweden. She reiterated that Sweden is fully supportive of the U.S. efforts, and noted that the text would contain language to that effect.

¶3. (C/NF) An Italian diplomat, described a "very difficult" Working Group meeting December 1, reiterating the Swedish diplomat's comment that the issue would be decided only by Ministers in their December 7-8 meetings. She said that Italy was working to have a "balanced" statement that emphasized the importance of re-starting negotiations. Italy wants, she said to "avoid putting all the blame on one side" (i.e., Israel) and to avoid "putting the other (i.e., the Palestinians) on the path to a dangerous decision"--in other words toward a unilateral declaration of independence. She said she has clear instructions from Rome to avoid language that puts the EU in the position of deciding conditions for restarting negotiations or that pre-judges final status issues, such as East Jerusalem.

¶4. (C/NF) A Spanish diplomat also described extremely difficult discussions, but was more circumspect on the details. He said the version leaked to Haaretz was "very preliminary," with many issues still to be decided. The diplomat said he had urged his colleagues to read carefully through Senator Mitchell's recent press backgrounder regarding the U.S. reaction to Israel's recent announcement of a West Bank settlement moratorium and noting Senator Mitchell's continuing efforts to start negotiations, suggesting that Spain was trying to promote language along the lines used by Senator Mitchell. He reminded us that the

final text would be decided by consensus, meaning that truly unacceptable language would not go forward. He pointed out clear statements by former High Representative Solana on the dangers of "premature recognition" of a Palestinian state, suggesting that discussions were being guided by that view.

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Committee (PSC) amba` Ministers, but echoing.

15. (C/NF) Comment: The Swedish presidency has been very successful in keeping the EU united in Qupport of U.S. efforts; however, we understand that in the wake of recent developments, suchas housing demolitions in East Jerusalem, thecontinued closure of Gaza, Israel's unwillingness to set a complete freeze on settlement activity, and frustration over the fact that negotiations have not started, there has been somQ sentiment that the EU should make stronger sQatements, and the Swedish effort probably reflects this sentiment. As all our interlocutor emphasized, the final language of the DecembQr FAC conclusions will be decided by ministers themselves, a sign of growing divisions about how to approach peace efforts. End Comment.

Murray

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